The week that was: 1ˢᵗ Jan – 7ᵗʰ Jan 2018

Handicappers to follow?

Chasers

Amber Gambler (06.01.18 Sandown) This 20/1 S2 qualifier was unlucky not to place here. He was held up and tried to take the odd fence home with him. They were not major errors, but they halted his momentum on a few occasions. He somewhat flew home after the last. It may have looked more impressive as those in front were stopping. However, this was his second run after an absence and this was his first in 65 days here, so he may have needed it. Ian Williams has been a bit in and out of form as well. This 8-year-old is only 3/7 over fences and this was a run of promise. It will be interesting to watch his next few starts as I suspect he'll go close to winning, if well placed.

Rathlin Rose (06.01.18 Chepstow) This 10-year-old ran an eye-catching race in the Welsh National I thought. I was impressed by how he travelled into this contest, before weakening from 2 out. Aged 10 he's only had 8 chase starts and this run suggested he has more wins in him. I wonder if Pipe may be plotting up some sort of staying chase, maybe on slightly better ground over shorter. You'd like to think he could run well in the Veterans' Series one day – maybe he'll turn up to next year's final at Sandown! He has won twice at the track so keep an eye out of he pops up there again. He may go close in a chase this season, based on this run.

Hurdlers

Tailor Tom (04.01.18 Bangor) A winning tip from 'the notes' and this may be one for the long-term notebook. I doubt he'll be much of a price when reappearing, but you never know. He just managed to win this having lacked a turn of foot in a slowly run race, losing position, and taking a while to get going. A superb jump at the last won it I think. This was very testing ground and he should be marked down as a dour stayer. He was still green here and there should be more to come. He could be one to track when he goes chasing, which probably won't be until next season at the earliest. I suspect he would appreciate a stronger pace and even further. He may be no world beater but his liking for a heavy ground stamina test should be noted.

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Stats The Way To Do It

Henry Brooke

Some of my jockeys' research has been doing ok so I thought I'd look at Henry Brooke who is freelance (I think) and in my mind, must be one of the better jockeys on the northern circuit.

I have mentioned him in passing before as I have noted how he occasionally changes tactics on a handicap chaser, suddenly riding them more aggressively than on recent starts. We saw that with Sky Full Of Stars who was one of those winners from Section 1 that got away from me- he didn't hit a strategy and I didn't tip him in the notes. He carried none of my money. Hopefully some of you made a better case than I did. The way in, in hindsight, was the booking of Brooke. It should have made me look at him more closely. Having been held up on his previous start Brooke rode him right near the front, taking it up before they turned for home. His proven form in heavy helped but the ride won the day.

So, what useful pointers are there?

I have only looked at stats from the start of 2017. A jockey's fortunes can depends on their agent and who they ride for, with relationships changing season to season.

All his rides sent off at 20/1 or bigger SP: 0/142,12p

So, of those that were 18/1 or shorter SP…

All rides at the following tracks:-

- Hexham: 8/30,15p, +52 BFSP
- Ayr: 7/24, 9p, +40
- Doncaster: 5/14,9p, +13

Those are the three tracks where he has ridden at least 5 winners and turned a decent profit.

They make a handy little 'micro' to follow

- Henry Brooke
- All Races
- Hexham / Ayr / Doncaster
- 18/1 or shorter SP

2017- : ***68 bets / 20 wins / 29% sr / 33 places / +105 BFSP / AE 1.94***

Those 20 winners come from 12 different trainers and I have no doubt his skill, ability and tactical nous will have been responsible for plenty of those wins.

I wouldn't back them systematically as such but again, another decent starting point for further research.

Now let's turn to *Handicap Chases* (excluding Novice handicaps), still 18/1 or short SP

On all handicap chasers, 18/1< he is 18/103,39 places…in that context…

- 2m 0.5f – 2m3f: 7/16, 8p, +17
- 2m7.5f – 3m1.5f: 9/28, 15p, +32
  - Total: 44 bets / 16 wins / 23 places / +49
- 1 handicap chase win only: 8/24,12p, +17
- 3-5 chase runs: 8/17,11p, +36
  - Those two stats highlighting unexposed chasers but with some experience
- 3 or 4 runs only in previous 90 days (hard fit): 9/29,14p, +34

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That's it for Henry Brooke. A few angles to keep an eye on as 2018 progresses. *Nick Schofield* has gone freelance this season and I plan to have a look at his stats next week. He has ridden 4 winners from his last 6 rides. He is very good and much underrated. Jack Barber uses him as does Jeremy Scott. He will ride many a jockey to sleep in low grade, mid-week races.

Sandy Thompson (A M Thompson)

He trained a make-all winner for Section 1 last week who hacked up at 9/2. I noted from the stats in the Geegeez Racecards his record over 'sprint' distances, so thought I'd have a closer look.

Put simply, all his runners over 1m7-2m1f are worth noting: (since start of 2015-)

- 68 bets / 16 wins / 28 places / +61 SP / +203 BFSP / AE 1.44
  - 10/1 + : 1/27,6p, +179 BFSP (one monster)
  - 17/2 or shorter SP: 15/41, 22p, +25
  - Those with just 1-2 career runs: 6/20,10p, +65 , +204 BFSP
    - Includes the monster winner and some other big priced placed horses

These stats compare favourable to all runners over 2m1.5f or further: 33/217,82p, AE 0.86

That's it for this week's stats offering.

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One final thought… Buywise… learning points…

I thought I'd reflect on his win as it could well be my proudest tipping performance to date, given the history of the horse and how the race panned out. I will rarely read a race, or set of pointers, better than that. The key is to maintain those standards. This isn't some back-slapping exercise, but I wanted to re-cap on the thought process. I like to keep hammering such points for my own progression but if some of you find them useful, even better…

I'll just list the pieces of the jigsaw that went through my mind pre-race and how the stars aligned…

On paper it was clear they could go hard / the race was packed of horses long in the tooth who were not doing anything different- yes it is a veterans' race but there are less exposed veterans! And many seemed out of sorts / many had raced in last year's renewal / out leapt Buywise… the jockey booking first caught the eye, the trainer/jockey stats backed that up- he doesn't use LA often but they are deadly when he does / LA is a quiet rider who I thought would suit the horse- that is one of the few occasions I have thought about the jockey style + horse, I should do it more / his run LTO was eye-catching on video – he ran ok but wasn't beaten up / only three starts ago he was running a fine race in a Festival handicap (they don't get more competitive), now 7lb lower/ his first run in a veteran's chase I think, bringing different form lines/profile to the table / proven form on heavy and at the time of year. It was intriguing to see him over this trip up a stiff, muddy hill – his downfalls had been jumping errors when going fast on spring ground, over shorter, never quite getting there. There was a chance he would relish conditions and be able to potter around out the back and pick up the pieces / he had something about it, a touch of class, and more youth in his legs than some.

And that was it really, all those factors combined to make him stand out at 16/1. A price you can take a chance on. The race went perfectly to plan and in truth I'm not sure he has ever jumped so well. If LA keeps the partnership and they keep to 3m+ on soft, they could have plenty more fun with him. There is talk of the Grand National. He may take a fence home with him but I wouldn't fall off my seat if they hunted him around and he placed. Interesting.

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That's all for this week, thanks for reading,

Josh